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CLUSTER VIII: CULTURAL AND
POSTCOLONIAL CRITIQUES IN LATCRIT
THEORY: To the People Sitting in Darkness: A
Resolve for Unity and Integration*

* This title is borrowed from Mark Twain's anti-imperialist essay, "To the Person Sitting in Darkness." Ana M. Otero**

BIO:

** Ana M. Otero teaches law at Thurgood Marshall School of Law and serves as Associate Municipal Court Judge for the City of Houston. I am indebted to Alicia Abreu, who read my paper and offered invaluable suggestions, to Michael Olivas for his support and mentorship, and to my research assistant, Nathaniel Savali for thorough and comprehensive research.

SUMMARY: ... On April 29, 1962, at the age of eleven, I fled Cuba and entered the United States as a political exile - an enemy of the revolution. ... The story of the Cuban revolution should best be told by those on whose backs it was built: by the millions of Cubans who live in strife and abject poverty; by the international army of Cuban mercenaries who fight and die around the world in pursuit of Castro's lofty ideals; by the founders and the followers of the revolution; and, by the Cubans who have relinquished freedom and endure intellectual and political oppression, and who continue today to live meager and austere lives in the name of solidarity, unity, and the homeland. ... Having just left a conference which focused on the desolate reality of Cubans in the island and the uncertainty of its future, it struck me as offensive to see Cuba portrayed as a tourist paradise; exploited, again, for the benefit of greedy investors and the Cuban political elite. ... History will tell whether we will unite to salvage the dignity of a nation and the spirit of a trodden people from the ashes and whether our children will hear Marti's words in their dreams: ...

[*1133]

I. Prologue

On April 29, 1962, at the age of eleven, I fled Cuba and entered the United States as a political exile - an enemy of the revolution. I was accompanied in this overt act of insurrection by my five-year old cousin and I was sent to New Jersey to stay with my aunt and

uncle. We were permitted to take only the clothes on our backs. I also brought a doll which I still keep as a dubious keepsake of my single act of counter-revolution. The arrangement was seemingly simple. My family, my parents and siblings, would join me in a few weeks to begin our brief stay in the United States while we waited for Castro's inevitable fall, becoming one more family to join the "frightened legion of the dispossessed." n1

I never saw my family again until 1967 - five years later, when my father arrived and died all in the month of September. Fortunately, in 1962 I was both too young and too naive to appreciate the full impact of this separation. My family was too desperate to foresee the possibility that we would not see each other again until I was a grown woman. This gross miscalculation of Castro's longevity, [*1134] coupled with the unfounded belief that the United States would intervene to save Cuba, would have enduring and far-reaching consequences for Cubans within and Cubans without. n2

II. Introduction

Almost forty years later, Professor Alicia Abreu asked me to participate in "Cubans without Borders," one of the concurrent panels to be held at the Sixth Annual LatCrit Conference. n3 One of the purposes of the program was to "take the long foreshadowed step of affirmatively and self-consciously exploring the links that bind Latina/o Communities in the United States to their homeland societies, cultures and economies and how the impact of such globalization informs an articulation of LatCrit theory and discourse." n4 As a Cuban-American academician, I found this objective thought-provoking; from a personal perspective, I found it difficult to explore and emotionally traumatic. Most of us in the panel had never met, and in an effort to prepare for the conference, Professor Abreu, as our moderator, encouraged us via electronic mail to exchange ideas and to explore the topics we wanted to develop. n5 The [*1135] discussions that ensued among us were telling and revealing; all laden with personal stories and filled with individual drama. All of us shared concerns about the Cuban dilemma. All of us also appeared to feel a collective, ambiguous, but palpable melancholic duality; a need to desperately assimilate and be assimilated, but an equal fear of losing our ethnicity; a lack of full identity with the

United States, with an equally full lack of connectedness to our roots - our homeland.

In the late 1950's, most of us who participated in the panel were mere children. Our parents made the irreversible and enduring decisions that changed our destinies. The immediate effect of the Cuban Revolution on our lives was brutal and chaotic. We were caught in a political whirlwind. In its path, it uprooted families, separating parents from children, pitting brothers against each other, and hurling us onto foreign lands to find our separate ways. In these new lands, we were forced to learn new languages, new cultures, new values. Those of us who were young assimilated quickly the new ways, but confronted parents who held stubbornly to the memories and were obstinate to change. We became an inextricable part of an event that has now spanned fifty years and which forced a seemingly insignificant Caribbean island to the forefront of history.

The Cuban Revolution may have discrete symbolic meanings for the world at large. To developing nations struggling to found their own freedom, it may represent a model to admire and emulate. To leftist scholars, who observe and analyze world events from the comfort of their upscale homes in industrialized nations where milk and honey abounds and to whom "ration cards" n6 and "period of rectification" n7 are only words, our revolution is a panacea to Third World ills. But there are many truths that can be perceived from the same story; and there are many different ways to perceive the same event.

The story of the Cuban revolution should best be told by those on whose backs it was built: by the millions of Cubans who live in strife and abject poverty; by the international army of Cuban mercenaries [*1136] who fight and die around the world in pursuit of Castro's lofty ideals; by the founders and the followers of the revolution; and, by the Cubans who have relinquished freedom and endure intellectual and political oppression, and who continue today to live meager and austere lives in the name of solidarity, unity, and the homeland. But it should also be told by Cubans who were "dispossessed." For despite what this revolution may mean to the world at large, to us it means primarily that we have been destined to live without our national borders and to cling desperately to memories of a tenuous past while adapting to a newness that will always bear traces of the unfamiliar. Stranded from our roots, we persist in living our old ways; separated from childhood memories, we strive to teach our children the little we remember. We live dual lives: one foot in the homeland, and another in our new world. Not enough Cuban, but never completely part of the inevitable new world that seeks to engulf us. We

have endured the separation and destruction of families, the fragmentation of our identities, and the immutable sense of being homeless and alone.

I am not a historian. I make no presumptuous attempt to add to the vast lore of Cuban history. n8 But because I believe ardently in the many inherent powers of storytelling, n9 I make a simple gesture in the spirit of LatCrit n10 to recount my story, a journey shared with so many [*1137] other Cuban Americans; an attempt to begin to assess the inevitable path of reconciliation which must take place if Cubans from within and Cubans from without are to live in harmony.

This essay draws from the discussions of the LatCrit panelists on the topic of "Cubans Without Borders" and expands on the thoughts shared at the conference. In the backdrop of the schism created by the Elian Gonzalez saga n11 among Cuban Americans, the emotional frenzy spawned among the Miami exiles, and the advent of imminent political change in Cuba, it is incumbent upon us to begin to discuss paths of inclusion, unity, and integration.

Part I is my story and explains what being a "Cuban Without Borders" means to me. Part II provides a brief overview of the political events that preceded the Cuban Revolution. Part III looks at the many voices of the revolution today. Part IV explores the possibilities for the future of the pueblo Cubano and Cubans in the diaspora.

III. Cubans Without Borders: A Personal Story

The borders of a country create a construct of national unity. The institutional memories of identity, culture, social, and political values forge an impenetrable bond and infuse strength and ethnic pride. [*1138] When you are forced to leave your homeland as a political exile, the foundation of this construct is shaken, and with the passing of time the bond becomes tenuous and frail. Eventually, you forget the depth and breadth of your language, the scenic images of your country become hazy and dull, the childhood memories fade, and the threads of life in your country - the lullabies, the songs, the poetry, the music-are forgotten.

But often times, citizens of a country live in abject poverty, beseeched by strife and in the shadows of economic and social progress. For them, the national borders may not have the same significance. For while presumably they enjoy the privileges of identity and national pride, the consequence of poverty and inequity is to create veritable borders which they cannot escape. Rather than being instilled with pride and a sense of unity, the citizens become isolated and "dispossessed" within their own borders.

This, too, could have been my story. The irony is that the revolution caused me to live without borders in the sense of losing a homeland and struggling with my national identity. Had I lived the life that was intended for me, I would have remained in my country surrounded by insurmountable borders of strife and deprivation.

I was adopted at birth. My biological mother was a woman who lived in a rural area in the interior of Cuba. She had fled to Havana seeking freedom from a domineering, possessive husband, and a life of bitter sacrifice. She married for a second time in Havana and by the time I was born she had already borne ten other children. My mother worked as a maid in the home of a Spanish businessman in Havana who owned a factory and who lived a life of prosperity and wealth. I was born in this house and adopted by this family. Throughout my childhood years, and until I left Cuba at the age of eleven, my adoptive family took me to visit my natural parents. In retrospect, I don't think I thought of them as my parents, but rather as a very poor family that we were helping out. Although my memories are fragmented and perhaps tainted by a veil of evasiveness and the innocence of youth, I remember with pain the striking comparison of our homes. I lived in a beautiful home that my father built for my mother; a massive structure of stone. The house was a testament to her sense of beauty and design. Filled with walls of glass and sparkling granite floors, winding stairs led to a second floor where balconies wrapped around the house in a setting of lush tropical gardens. I had a nanny who took care of me and whom I remember with love and affection. I attended a private catholic school and I wore beautiful and expensive clothes. My biological family lived only minutes from my home, but their lives were quite different. Their house, devoid of even the most simple of necessities, had dirt floors, no bathroom, no air conditioning or screened-in [*1139] windows, little furniture, and no running water. On the few occasions I spent the night, I remember with despairing clarity the whole family sitting around in a dimly lit room shucking tons of corn so that my mother could make "majarete," n12 which my father would sell out of a bike-driven cart. I don't know what level of education, if any, my mother had, but I know my father could neither read nor write. My siblings walked miles to school. The children in the neighborhood were dressed in rags and were always without shoes.

During my childhood years, my adoptive family was to me my "real" family. My surname, Otero n13, was the only name I had ever known. Accordingly, when the revolution erupted it was assumed that I would leave with them as their daughter. But, after many years of struggling with this, today, I realize that my birth

parents did not welcome this event and our separation, despite the fact that I barely knew them, affected them deeply. Although my adoptive mother is the only mother I have ever really known, I nevertheless always felt a silent bond with my biological mother, and had struggled for many years with a sense of rejection and unanswered questions that separation brought by the Cuban revolution had exacerbated.

In 1978, I felt compelled to visit my biological mother in Cuba. I will omit from this essay the emotional trauma this trip caused me, but what I found after twenty years of revolution was not much different from what I had left in 1962. My mother had suffered surgery as a result of a brain tumor that occurred in the late 60's. She was prostrate and paralyzed on the right side of her body. Her living conditions were as meager and desolate as they had been twenty years before. Because of poor medical treatment and the lack of physical therapy, she never walked again. The house was the same one I used to visit as a child and with some minor exceptions, it was virtually unchanged. Conditions were worsened, however, by Castro's economic debacle; in a speech made in late 1980 Castro told the Cuban people that "[they] would have to endure shortages of the most basic foodstuffs and clothing for the foreseeable future." n14 It was during this period that "[the] average Cuban [was] rationed two [*1140] pounds of meat per month, one and one-half pounds of chicken per month; two ounces of coffee every fifteen days; four meters of cloth per year; two packs of cigarettes per week; one pair of shoes, one pair of trousers (or one dress), and two shirts a year." n15

My mother was sometimes moved to a makeshift wheelchair and the rooms in this small house were stifling. I visited the "American" store n16 and paid \$ 150.00 for an 8" oscillating fan; the type you get here for \$ 12.00. I paid equally exorbitant amounts of money for foodstuffs and canned goods. Inevitably, I felt guilty giving my dollars to Castro, but compelled to do what I could for my mother. It is difficult to sustain ideology in the face of such abject poverty and hopeless misery.

In 1978, as spartan as things were, most Cubans were still able to obtain foodstuffs and medicines by relying on the black market. This had become a way of life. American dollars, which many Cubans received from their families in the states or exiles traveling to the island, would go far in the underground market that had been created by sheer need and desperation. But, as ominous portent of the unprecedented austerity that would befall the next decade, in 1980, 10,000 Cubans stormed the Peruvian embassy in Havana seeking political asylum, resulting in the Mariel boatlift, which

eventually brought 125,000 refugees to Miami. In 1981, when President Reagan was inaugurated, the United States instituted some of the most hostile policies against Cuba. And subsequently, in 1986 and 1990, Castro launched his "campaign of rectification of errors," n17 and the "special period of peacetime," n18 respectively. My [*1141] [*1142] mother died during the former. She left this world as she entered it; suffering in silent stoicism the ravages of inequality, injustice, and oppression.

IV. A Brief History: Prelude to the Revolution

1962, the year of my sojourn into a foreign land, was heralded by an ominous pronouncement made by Castro: "I am a Marxist-Leninist and I shall be one to the end of my life." n19 It was a prophecy that would be long-lived. This prophecy marked the beginning of a new year which would speed precipitously to the culminating event of 1962 - the Cuban Missile Crisis. n20 How such paucity of thought and vision could survive the patent writings on the wall could only be attributed to desperation. For in retrospect, this myopic collective view shared by many exiles that Castro would fall was grounded on fallacies, disbelief mingled with denial, and an imprecise understanding of the perilous road that led to the revolution.

On New Year's Eve 1958, when I was seven years old, Cuban dictator, Sergeant Fulgencio Batista, fled the island. The next day, the Cuban people exuberantly and with renewed hope welcomed the Cuban Revolution. While, historically, January 1, 1959 marks the beginning of the revolution, to fully appraise the political and social structure that catapulted Cuba into four decades of communism, one must fully understand the long process of oppression and subordination by Spain, United States, Cuban dictators, and [*1143] opportunistic foreign investors.

The discovery of Cuba in 1492 heralded four hundred years of foreign intervention and colonization by the Spaniards. During the sixteenth century, the first group of slaves arrived to work in the Jagua gold mine, French pirates plundered the island and Castillo del Morro, the strategically situated fort designed to repel attackers and located above the eastern entrance to the Havana harbor was completed. n21

By the end of this century, despite some battles by the indigenous Indians, Tainos or Ciboneys, the Spaniards had spread throughout the entire island and native Indians had been absorbed or wiped out by disease or repression. n22

By the mid eighteenth century, there were about a hundred small sugar plantations producing about "5,000 tons of sugar a year of which only a tenth was

officially exported." n23 In comparison, other "French and English sugar colonies ... had about six hundred larger plantations." n24 But Cuba had few suitable rivers to power the water mills, and in addition, Spain did not serve as a large-scale home market for the commodity. n25

Politically, control of the island rested with the captain-general, the father of a small, poorly paid bureaucracy of officials appointed by Spain who expected to gain profits from graft and corruption and return to their country wealthy. Many, however, stayed in the island and mixed with the criollos. n26 By the eighteenth century, many of these Spaniards residing for generations in Cuba had created their own blend of criollo aristocracy - wealthy land and plantation owners who seldom visited their own homeland. n27

In 1762, England declared war on Spain and Havana was invaded by a British expeditionary force which occupied the island for almost two years. As a result, myriad merchants from the British empire converged in Cuba, opening its markets to foreigners. As a direct consequence of the British conquest, Cuba was transformed into a prosperous sugar colony. n28

[*1144] During the period of the Napoleonic Wars, 1792-1815, Cuba continued to prosper despite restrictions imposed by Spain. n29 Demand for sugar, tobacco, and coffee increased as trade between the United States and Cuba grew. n30

By the mid nineteenth century, Cuba was "the richest and most populated of Spain's two remaining American colonies." n31 The majority of Cuban elites by the late 1860's had begun to favor independence from Spain. n32 A number of factors converged to ferment the spirit of revolution: A nationalistic sentiment had been fueled by contemporary philosophers and poets who echoed a growing opposition to the tyrannical abuses of Spain and its continued enforcement of an archaic colonial commercial system; n33 a weakening slave trade - an integral part of the sugar production; n34 and a decline in the economy due to increased competition in the market for sugar. n35

The war of independence of 1868 was led by Cuba's landowning aristocracy in direct revolt against Spain's political control; n36 its main objective was to gain Cuban sovereignty and independence, but it was impeded by a lack of political organization and cohesiveness. n37 The Ten Year War (1868-1878), Jose Marti, Cuba's quintessential hero and poet, argued was "lost only through a lack of preparation and unity." n38 "The revolution, [he] insisted in 1882, is not merely a passionate outburst of integrity, or the gratification of a need to fight or exercise power, but

rather a detailed understanding dependent on advanced planning and great foresight." n39

[*1145] The war with Spain that ended in 1898 left an island ravaged by unparalleled savagery and destruction, and a country of warriors weakened and spent from their bloody effort. However, the struggle for sovereignty was lost when the United States installed a provisional government, and occupied the island from 1898 to 1901, and subsequently intervened in 1906-1909, 1912, and 1917. n40

On February 11, 1901, the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba was adopted. n41 Just a month later, in portent of a long legacy of subordination, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Army Appropriation bill with the Platt Amendment as a rider. n42 Despite ardent opposition and efforts to revise its language, the Platt Amendment was accepted by the Cuban Constitutional Convention on June 12, 1901. n43

Cuba's first President, Tomas Estrada Palma, elected to office in 1902, brought honesty and integrity to government and a path of stability characterized by economic recovery appeared to emerge. n44 But four hundred years of subordination by the Spaniards, the ravages of war, a lack of political maturity and experience in self-governance, and new economic and political footholds by the U.S. quickly dispersed any hope of continued independence, and in 1906 Estrada Palma, plagued by unrest, invoked the Platt Amendment hurling Cuba again under foreign intervention. n45

[*1146] Cuba's short period of independence from 1902 to 1959 was marred with U.S. interventions, n46 fractious political groups, incessant rebellions, unfettered public corruption, economic instability, erratic sugar price fluctuations, and a succession of presidents "whose terms were characterized by venality, nepotism, incompetence, graft, and despotism." n47

[*1147] By 1922, the country had experienced serious economic troubles and the U.S. investment in Cuba had increased drastically. n48 The economic debacle awakened the nationalist spirit as Cubans realized how vulnerable the nation was to economic forces and the degree of American domination. n49 General Gerardo Machado, a veteran of the war of independence, an energetic, and tough liberal man was elected in 1925. n50 Machado brought order and stability to Cuba during his first term in office, but personal ambition and greed would hurl Cuba into 8 years of political oppression, endemic corruption, random assassinations, gangsterism, and the first full dictatorship of the republic. n51

The "Machadato," as this era was called, resulted in the revolution of 1933, and its revolutionaries, unlike Marti's in 1898, "combined rejection of foreign domination with demands to transform the local political economy by ending large landholdings, nationalizing public services, regulating foreign investment, and protecting the rights of workers." n52

From 1933 to 1952 Cuba appeared to be moving toward democracy. n53 But the series of puppet presidents and shadow governments that ruled the island until Batista regained power in 1952 were ineffectual in making significant social reforms or bringing cohesiveness, unity, and order to the country.

Sergeant Fulgencio Batista's final reign of power from 1952 to 1958, not unlike that of his predecessors, was characterized with endemic government corruption and dishonesty, political instability, brutal violence, human rights violations, and graft. But his dubious and most memorable claim to fame in our history may be for [*1148] "building Havana's tourism industry by inviting gangsters such as Meyer Lansky to construct casinos, helping to fund their enterprises and taking a large chunk of the proceeds for himself." n54 "[His personal] plundering ... weakened Cuba's treasury and demoralized the army." n55

The lure of nightlife and gambling brought thousands of American tourists and investors n56 to Cuba. And while on the surface Cuba prospered, the economic and socio-political reality was much different. Years of endemic government corruption and political instability, overt poverty in rural areas, and a division of classes that was becoming more striking, coupled with rampant decadence in regime created a fertile ground for Castro's revolution. n57

V. 40 Years Of Revolution: The Many Voices Of Oppression

In the dawn of the 21st Century, after 40 years of the Cuban Revolution, there are many "truths" that emerge; each inseparable from the experience of the beholder.

To the third world, itself struggling for independence, economic self-sustenance, and the attainment of civil rights, the Cuban model represents the solution for the "multifaceted, social, economic, and political problems of development." n58

To the Cuban exiles, homeless and bereaved, forty years of [*1149] solitude have not quelled their desperate hatred for Castro's regime and they remain solidly planted in the anti-Castro, anti-communist rhetoric. Their loss, personal and real, is imbued with an emotional fury that is unforgiving and intransigent.

Many avidly support the U.S. embargo, and the most recent Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act, known as the Helms-Burton Act, which was signed into law on March 12, 1996. n59 To them, the revolution is an ignominious historical event devoid of redemption or absolution.

To the Cuban people, the masses, people like my biological family, who have endured austere years of unprecedented rigors, it can no longer foster a spirit of hope. Today, they confront a stark and bleak reality which forty years of failed promises and exhortations can no longer hide.

In June 1997, the Cuban Dissidence Task Group released to the world a document entitled "The Homeland Belongs To Us All," n60 a lengthy repudiation of the present government.

In it, the group examined a document prepared for the V Congress of the Communist party and attacked its import as deceitful and manipulative. In scathing eloquence, it vilified the main objective of the current regime:

The philosophy of the government is not to serve the people but to be their dictator. It is not its main objective to guarantee the citizenry a quality of life which has a minimum of decorum. Power, exercised through totalitarian control, is the end that is being pursued with this political ploy. No longer is anyone fooled by the much-touted call to social justice. The wage rates combined with the stagnation of other economic factors makes the situation of the populace more difficult each day. And the more they deteriorate, the more economic activities are politicized and militarized. n61

[*1150] And then there are the Cuban elites composed of members of the Communist Party, its high ranking officers, its affiliated mass organizations, the military, the government bureaucracy, the state security apparatus, and the judiciary. Their position, too, is intractable. Entrenched in forty years of rhetoric against capitalism and the evils of imperialism, they perpetuate their ideologies through their rituals of oppression, and exhort the masses to sacrifice for unity and the wellbeing of the homeland. Their lives, however, are very different from that of the masses; wallowing in privileges, they rule from a place remote from hunger and strife. Their legitimacy rapidly eroding as the egalitarian philosophies they spew resonate with hypocrisy in the face of increasing economic desolation and human devastation.

VI.

"To The People Living In Darkness": A Resolve For Unity And Integration

At a newsstand in the airport, on my way home from this past LatCrit conference, I was struck by a magazine cover of a beautiful beach with sparkling clear blue water and white sand set against a cloudless blue sky. Walking on this idyllic paradise was a tall, slender blonde woman. The cover read: "CUBA - The Best Resort Hotels, Nightclubs, Restaurants, and Much More." n62 As I read through the magazine, I discovered the beach is located on an island called Cayo Largo, 115 miles southeast of Havana, where the Spanish Hotel group Sol Melia is managing a \$ 25 million, 296-room resort called Sol Club Cayo Largo. n63

The issue containing a special report on Cuba portrayed beautiful pictures of the new resorts, quaint restaurants, and other well-known sites like the Hotel Nacional; as well as articles for the well-versed traveler. n64 The opening line of the article:

[*1151]

Brightly colored bungalows in pastel shades of pink, turquoise, violet and lime green shine brightly in the Caribbean sun, a stone's throw from the shallow, warm sea and powder-like sandy beach. A few windsurfers race across the early afternoon chop, while a smart sportfishing boat and large catamaran bob up and down in the distance. People stroll along the water's edge. Children play and build sand castles. Two men sit on the beach sunbathing, drinking cocktails and smoking cigars. n65

Having just left a conference which focused on the desolate reality of Cubans in the island and the uncertainty of its future, it struck me as offensive to see Cuba portrayed as a tourist paradise; exploited, again, for the benefit of greedy investors and the Cuban political elite. What made me feel a deep sense of embittered anger was the stark contrast this description bears to the overt poverty and sacrifice the Cuban people must endure in their daily lives. The average Cuban lives in deplorable, miserable conditions under the thatched or tin roofs I saw in my mother's neighborhood, where malnourished children go to sleep hungry, the water is undrinkable, and young prostitutes sell their bodies to tourists in exchange for the barest necessities.

These luxurious resorts widely advertised in the U.S. and the world are created by foreigners for the sole enjoyment of foreigners. Cubans are not only barred from visiting these areas, but those who work there are forbidden from mixing with the tourists. n66 Tourism,

which most countries covet and which typically provides wealth to the national citizens, in Cuba represents one more flagrant anomaly of a system that simply has failed and one more reason as to why this regime must come to an end.

Whether Castro has achieved his lofty goals of eradicating [*1152] poverty, illiteracy, and health problems, defending the country from foreign domination, and bringing equality and dignity to Cuba is also arguable. Whatever achievements may have been made have been eradicated by forty years of political indoctrination, economic mismanagement, isolation, dependence on the Soviets, and utter depravation, which have left the island and its people spent and defeated. Cuba today is in a worse shape structurally and economically than it was when Batista fled the country in 1958. And at the close of this first decade of the twenty first century, most of the people who remember the inequities of the 50's will be gone. The only people who will be left in Cuba are those for whom this government has been the only government they have known, and the only government that has failed. n67

The glaring question is how Cuba can move towards a future of freedom, stability and prosperity in the face of so many past and present obstacles; and more importantly, can it ever aspire to do so devoid of internal civil strife and independent of foreign domination?

The history of Cuba has not set a fertile precedent for these objectives. It is clear from the record, that after fighting bloody wars to gain independence from Spain, Cubans were unable to establish a government free of corruption and graft, or produce leaders that could lead the nation into stability and equality. And despite its lofty aspirations, Castro's relentless "periods" of economic austerity and his machinery of institutionalized oppressive tactics continue to ask the unthinkable of people who survive on imagination driven by sheer desperation but whose minimal needs are barely satisfied. Castro's government presumably founded on egalitarian principles has shamelessly reverted to the endemic exploitation of the 1950's, [*1153] dimming and breaking the soul and the spirit of the people.

Two LatCrit scholars have already offered solutions for the future. n68 I agree with both that any changes in the current regime will inevitably involve participation from Cubans in the diaspora, and reconciliation, to be feasible, will require mutual respect and understanding for the divergent paths traveled by Cubans within and Cubans outside the island during the past forty years.

Inevitably, Castro will die soon, and the spell he has cast on four generations of Cubans will dissipate quickly. It is unlikely that Cuba will ever again see a ruler of Castro's proportion; whose objectives, grounded on his self-assigned messianic role, were to a large degree [*1154] to attain power to assure a place for himself in history. n69

Despite the unfounded presumptions of Cuban exiles, it is unlikely that they will storm the island and force Cuba to immediately revert to democracy. Neither its pre-revolutionary history, nor the last forty years predict this outcome. It is also unlikely, however, that the new cadre of leaders born and raised in the throes of the revolution will relinquish power and swiftly substitute recalcitrant rhetoric and socialist ideologies. But the fall of communism worldwide in the last decade is a powerful omen that may dictate the new path Cuba might take. It is not impossible within my lifetime to see Cuba reach a measure of stability and prosperity. It depends on how much these new leaders have learned from the continued failures of the past and how willing they are to make the necessary compromises to rebuild not only the nation but the spirit of its people.

The economic reality is that Cuba will probably continue to rely on the already entrenched foreign investments in order to prosper, but the question remains can it do so without allowing foreigners to again usurp political power, and can it use this growing foreign investment to its economic advantage.

Finally, the role of the United States is an obvious concern. The past has proven that its active involvement in the shaping of Cuba's history has not always been impeccably selfless. A long and hard embargo, and the last forty years replete with incessant anti-imperialist indoctrination may present a serious obstacle to forging new alliances. Whether the United States is willing to participate and cooperate in the process of renewal, and whether this new generation of leaders can rise above the imperialist rhetoric and negotiate shrewdly and with cunning a relationship on equal footing, will undoubtedly affect the future of Cuba.

Cubans in the diaspora have much to offer to this depleted nation and its people who live in darkness. History will tell whether we will unite to salvage the dignity of a nation and the spirit of a trodden people from the ashes and whether our children will hear Marti's words in their dreams:

Let us rise up so that freedom will not be endangered by confusion or apathy or impatience in preparing it. Let us rise up too for the true republic, those of us

who, with our passion for right and our habit of hard work, will know how to preserve it... . And let us place around the star of our new flag this formula of love triumphant: "With all, and for the good of all." n70

FOOTNOTE-1:

n1. Louis A. Perez, Jr., *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality and Culture* 500 (1999) (quoting Salvador Diaz Verson, *One Man, One Battle* 123 (1980)). Exile was the obvious option. But the fact that it was obvious does not mean that it was easy. It was not. Nor does the fact that almost all of the early emigration represented self-imposed exile mean that departure was without heartache [Salvador] Diaz-Verson stated: "Thousands upon thousands of Cubans have sought refuge in Miami. Doctors, engineers, newspapermen, writers, businessmen-in short, the people who form the backbone of any civilized nation-were uprooted and transported to Florida People once able achievers thanks to study, hard work, and sacrifices became in their bewilderment a frightened legion of the dispossessed."

Id.

n2. For many the decision to emigrate was made slightly more bearable in the belief that the United States would eventually lose patience with the new order in Cuba and, as so often in the past, intervene to set things right. Their ties to North American ways, their understanding of U.S. behaviors past and present, persuaded them to believe that Washington would rid Cuba of Fidel Castro.

Id. at 500.

n3. The theme of this conference: Latino/as and the Americas: Centering North-South Frameworks in LatCrit Theory. LatCrit VI was sponsored by the University of Florida Levin College of Law, The Center for the Study of Race and Relations, The University of Florida Levin College of Law and The Center for Hispanic and Caribbean Legal Studies, University of Miami School of Law. It was co-sponsored by University of Florida Law Review. The conference was held on April 26-29, 2001 at the University of Florida

Hotel & Conference Center, Gainesville, Florida.

n4. LatCrit VI, Substantive Program Outline, *Latinas/os and the Americas: Centering North-South Frameworks in LatCrit Theory* (Apr. 26-29, 2001) (on file with author) available at <http://personal.law.miami.edu/~fvaldes/latcrit/levidocs/levisubstantiveprogram.html> (last visited on Oct. 17, 2002).

n5. Our panel was composed of the following individuals: Alicia Abreu, Moderator, Temple University. She left Cuba in 1960 when she was 8 years old. See Alice G. Abreu, *Lessons from LatCrit: Insiders and Outsiders, All at the Same Time*, [53 U. Miami L. Rev. 787, 789 \(1999\)](#). Ivonne Tamayo, Willamette University, left Cuba in 1960 when she was 5 years old. Email from Ivonne Tamayo, Willamette University, to Ana Otero, Thurgood Marshall School of Law (on file with author). Berta Hernandez-Truyol of The University of Florida Levin College (not a formal member of the panel, but an avid participant in our e-mail discussions), left Cuba at the age of 7. Email correspondence with Berta Hernandez-Truyol, University of Florida Levin College (on file with author). Dr. Myra Mendible, Interim Writing Coordinator at Nova Southeastern University, left Cuba when she was 5. Jesus Jambrina, a journalist from Cuba, currently pursuing a graduate program at the University of Iowa. Jesus was born and raised in Cuba during the Cuban revolution.

n6. The reference is to the government imposed ration-card system in which Cubans are entitled to purchase only allotted quantities of rationed foodstuffs and clothing per family.

n7. The reference is to an austere plan launched by Castro in 1986 which was designed to rectify rampant violations of regulations and loss of economic control by the government, the net effect of which was to create unprecedented shortages in an already burdened economic system.

n8. Cuba has inspired vast and voluminous literature covering in meticulous detail its full history. For a comprehensive

bibliography see Louis A. Perez, Jr., *The Cuban Revolution Twenty-Five Years Later: A Survey of Sources, Scholarship, and State of Literature, in Cuba: Twenty Five-Years of Revolution, 1959-1984*, at 393 (Sandor Halebsky & John M. Kirk eds., 1985). In his eloquent scholarly style, Perez divides and lists the vast literature produced in what he calls two predominant categories: pre-revolutionary political and diplomatic history of Cuba from the late nineteenth century to mid twentieth century. *Id.* at 394. This literature prompted by the Cuban Revolution forced historians to rely on the only accessible records - document collections in U.S. depositories. *Id.* at 395. These limited resources skewed and influenced the historical research and the consequent literary effort. The second major category and the most extensive covers works dealing with basically every facet of the revolutionary period. For more recent literature, see Louis A. Perez, Jr., *supra* note 1; Marifeli Perez -Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy* (1993); *Cuba: A Short History* (Leslie Bethell ed., 1993). For an anthology of contemporary Latino/a fiction featuring the work of twenty-nine writers from diverse ethnic backgrounds including many Cuban writers, see *Iguana Dreams* (Delia Poey & Virgil Suarez eds., 1992).

n9. So, stories -stories about oppression, about victimization, about one own's brutalization - far from deepening the despair of the oppressed, lead to healing, liberation, mental health. They also promote group solidarity. Storytelling emboldens the hearer, who may have had the same thoughts and experiences the storyteller describes, but hesitated to give them voice. Having heard another express them, he or she realizes, I am not alone.

Richard Delgado, *Storytelling For Oppositionists and Others: A Plea for Narrative*, [87 Mich. L. Rev. 2411, 2437 \(1988\)](#).

n10. The spirit of LatCrit is boundless, tolerant to diversity, and receptive to incessant change. To me, the beauty of this movement is that it allows us personal expression and to move individually

towards a collective goal. Fortunately, the previous dearth of latina/o scholarly voices has gradually eroded, and thanks to the many talented pioneers, there is an eloquent abundance of articles explaining the inception and meaning of LatCrit theory and the legacy it seeks to leave. See, e.g., Elvia R. Arriola, *LatCrit Theory, International Human Rights, Popular Culture, and the Faces of Despair in INS Raids*, [28 U. Miami Inter-Am. L. Rev. 245 \(1996-97\)](#); Berta E. Hernandez-Truyol, *Indivisible Identities: Culture Clashes, Confused Constructs and Reality Checks*, [2 Harv. Latino L. Rev. 199 \(1997\)](#); Berta E. Hernandez-Truyol, *International Law, Human Rights, and Latcrit Theory: Civil and Political Rights-An Introduction*, [28 U. Miami Inter-Am. L. Rev. 223 \(1996-97\)](#); Elizabeth M. Iglesias, *International Law, Human Rights and Latcrit Theory*, [28 U. Miami Inter-Am. L. Rev. 177 \(1996-97\)](#); Francisco Valdes, *Foreword: Latina/o Ethnicities, Critical Race Theory, and Post-Identity Politics in Postmodern Legal Culture: From Practices to Possibilities*, 9 *La Raza L.J.* 1 (1996); Francisco Valdes: *Foreword: Poised at the Cusp: LatCrit Theory, Outsider Jurisprudence and Latina/o Self-Empowerment*, [2 Harv. Latino L. Rev. 1 \(1997\)](#); Francisco Valdes, *Under Construction: LatCrit Consciousness, Community, and Theory*, [85 Cal. L. Rev. 1087 \(1997\)](#).

n11. The reference is to Elian Gonzalez, the six-year old Cuban boy who was rescued by two fishermen when the boat carrying his mother and other Cubans escaping the island was wrecked. Elian, the sole survivor, was turned over to his relatives in Miami who sought to have him stay in the country. The legal battle as to whether he should stay in this country (as presumably his mother had yearned to do), or whether to return him to his father in Cuba prompted a long and vitriolic debate among Cubans, spawning a media circus of international proportions. See Berta Hernandez-Truyol, *On Becoming the Other: Cubans, Castro, and Elian - a LatCritical Analysis*, [78 Denv. U. L. Rev. 687 \(2001\)](#).

n12. A popular Cuban dessert made with corn.

n13. I was "informally" adopted, a practice not uncommon in Cuba where children were raised by an "adoptive" family but no legal papers were drawn up. As a result, in order to leave Cuba with my adoptive family, the passport bore my birth name - Ana Gonzalez-Barbon. At the age of eleven, this name was as unfamiliar to me as the language and customs that confronted me in the United States. For years, teachers would call on me and I would not respond. Eventually, I was forced to accept that this was my name. I relinquished it as soon as I became an American citizen.

n14. Mark Falcoff, *Cuba as a Marxist-Leninist Regime*, in *Cuban Communism* 745, 746 (Irving Louis Horowitz ed., 7th ed. 1989).

n15. *Id.*

n16. The reference is to a government store that was set up in the old Sears in Havana where visiting Cubans paying strictly in American dollars could purchase food, canned goods, and other items for their families.

n17. The campaign of rectification was designed to correct multiple problems identified by the government in a document it issued in 1986.

[The report] documented widespread violations of regulations and lack of control over the economy. Work norms were outdated salaries incommensurate to output. Marginal production-originally meant to maximize use of residual materials - had superseded primary production in many enterprises. Many workers received a full day's pay for half a day's work for the state and spent the afternoons pursuing their private gain at other jobs. Too often managers contracted skilled labor at higher than prescribed wages without subsequently enforcing labor discipline to increase productivity. The investment process was chaotic and wasteful. Frequently, many enterprises did not enforce their budgets; sometimes, they never developed one. State inspections were generally ineffective... . Management regularly inflated prices to meet output in value without regard to the quality of

production. The planning process demanded inordinate amounts of paperwork and little attention to worker input.

The government report also highlighted the political consequences of these problems. Economism was pervasive. The pursuit of individual gain - excessive and often illegal - was the overriding concern of many people. Economic mechanisms and material incentives were displacing *conciencia*. Volunteer work had all but disappeared. Nepotism and *sociolismo* flourished. When transferred to new positions, cadres frequently hired their friends and relatives. Workers who denounced corruption often found themselves sidelined. When enforced, sanctions were more common against people in lower levels of authority. Management usually failed to involve workers in solving problems. State functionaries manifested disdain and disregard for public opinion and too often used state resources for private purposes. Too many enterprises showed discrepancies in cash transactions.

Perez-Stable, *supra* note 8, at 156-157 (citing *Plan de accion contra las irregularidades administrativas y los errores y debilidades del Sistema de Direccion de la Economia*, July 17, 1986 [Plan of action against the administrative irregularities and errors and weakness of the System of Economic Planning]).

n18. "The special period was an attempt to reinsert the Cuban economy into the world economy without relinquishing socialism and compromising national sovereignty to the United States." *Id.* at 158. The following story written around this period from inside Cuba gives the reader an accurate picture of the daily survival process Cubans must deal with:

Roberto, a middle aged Health Ministry translator, had just gone through the agony of organizing a birthday party for this three-year-old daughter. The preparations had kept him busy for nearly a month.

Long before the birthday, he had signed up at a toy store to buy a present. His ration

card entitled him to three non-specified toys every two years. This year, the only available toys were rubber balls, dolls, and miniature cars. He had chosen a Chinese doll. After signing up and getting his number - he was number 73 - he had to show up every day at noon for the roll call. If he failed to show up, he would lose his place. He had gotten the doll after making regular appearances in the line for five days in a row.

To buy a birthday cake, he had signed up two weeks earlier at the bakery, and got number 60 on the waiting list. He was supposed to be in line every day for the 6 p.m. roll call to keep his place. He would go himself whenever he could, or send his mother in law, a senior citizen, to replace him when he was tied up at his job.

The same procedure was necessary to purchase soft drinks, which one could get once a year for each family member's birthday. Roberto was number 32 on the list, and had to be in line every day at 7:30 p.m. to avoid losing his place. It took four days of roll call to get the drinks.

Then, there was the problem of candy. There had not been candy for several months at supermarket or grocery stores. After much scouting around, he finally heard that candy was being sold at the Havana zoo. Once there, he found out that each person was only allowed to buy two small bags. He queued up three times, for a total of six hours. The small confections looked cheap and weren't wrapped, but they were better than nothing.

After a long search for cellophane paper to wrap up the candy, Roberto and his wife found it at a funeral home. They got a sheet from the establishment's florist, cut it up, and wrapped the candy piece by piece. The couple didn't even try to find birthday balloons - nobody had seen any in years. Instead, they used what had become the standard birthday ornament in recent times - condoms.

"It's not very chic, but everybody uses them as birthday balloons," Roberto explained. "After a while, you forget what they are."

Andres Oppenheimer, *Castro's Final Hour: The Secret Behind the Coming Downfall of Communist Cuba* 375-76 (1992).

n19. Castro made this statement on December 2, 1961. See *The Cuba Reader: The Making of a Revolutionary Society*, app. A at 529 (Philip Brenner et al. eds., 1989). However, the official break of diplomatic relations between U.S. and Cuba occurred on January 3, 1961. On April 16 of that year, the CIA sponsored invasion of 1200 exiles landed at Playa Giron (Bay of Pigs) and was defeated within 72 hours. See Herbert L. Matthews, *The Bay of Pigs*, in *The Cuba Reader: The Making of a Revolutionary Society* 331, 334-35 (Phillip Brenner et al. eds., 1989).

n20. In October 1962, a U.S. reconnaissance aircraft photographed the construction of the intermediate range ballistic missiles sites placed in Cuba by the Soviet Union triggering the now infamous Cuban Missile Crisis, which nearly catapulted two superpowers into a nuclear war. President Kennedy demanded the withdrawal of the Soviet missiles and imposed the naval embargo. The crisis was resolved when the Soviet Union, without consulting Cuba, withdrew the missiles in exchange for the U.S. pledge that it would not invade Cuba. See Scott Armstrong & Philip Brenner, *Putting Cuba and Crisis Back in the Cuban Missile Crisis*, in *The Cuba Reader*, supra note 19, at 336-39. Earlier that year, in January, "the Organization of American States (OAS) launched the Alliance for Progress and suspended Cuba's membership." *The Cuba Reader*, supra note 19, at app. A, p.529. Castro reacted to this suspension "with the Second Declaration of Havana, calling upon the People of Latin America to rise up against imperialism and declaring, "The duty of a revolutionary is to make the revolution." Id. In 1962, food rationing begins and President Kennedy expands the embargo to include imports of all goods made from or containing Cuban materials.

n21. See generally Hugh Thomas, *Cuba or The Pursuit of Freedom* (Da Capo Press, 1998).

n22. Robin Blackburn, *Prologue to the Cuban Revolution*, in *The Cuba Reader*, supra note 19, at 43.

n23. Hugh Thomas, *Cuba c. 1750 - c. 1860*, in *Cuba: A Short History 2* (Leslie Bethell ed., 1993).

n24. *Id.*

n25. *Id.*

n26. *Id.* at 2-4.

n27. *Id.* at 4.

n28. See *id.* at 5. There were four main causes of the prosperity during this period:

first, the creation of a new market for sugar at home in Spain and elsewhere - including the newly independent United States of America; secondly the emergence of a class of landlords interested in developing their land and promoting wealth, rather than in preserving status; thirdly, the import of slaves from Africa to Cuba on a far larger scale than before; and finally a series of far-reaching economic reforms introduced by the enlightened ministers of King Charles III, not least the lifting of many of the old bureaucratic restraints on trade.

Id. at 5.

n29. See *id.* at 9.

n30. See *id.* at 14-15.

n31. See Luis E. Aguilar, *Cuba, c. 1860 - c. 1930*, in *Cuba: A Short History 21* (Leslie Bethell ed., 1993).

n32. See *id.* at 21.

n33. See *id.* at 22.

n34. See *id.*

n35. See *id.* at 21-23.

n36. Phillip Brenner et al., *Introduction to Part I: The Setting of the Cuban Revolution*, in *The Cuba Reader*, supra note 19, at 2.

n37. See Aguilar, supra note 31, at 25.

n38. Louis A. Perez, Jr., *Introduction to Jose Marti in the United States: The Florida Experience 2* (1995).

n39. *Id.*

n40. See Brenner et al., supra note 36 at 2.

n41. *Id.* at 4.

n42. Aguilar, supra note 31 at 39. U.S. Senator Orville H. Platt introduced as a resolution an amendment composed of seven articles which required Cuba to include it as an appendix to its Constitution. *Id.* The effect of the Platt Amendment was to further restrict the sovereignty of Cuba; in particular Articles III and VII which respectively read as follows:

III. That the government of Cuba consents that the United States may exercise the right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence, the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty, and for discharging the obligations with respect to Cuba imposed by the Treaty of Paris on the United States, now to be assumed and undertaken by the government of Cuba.

... .

VII. That to enable the United States to maintain the independence of Cuba, and to protect the people thereof, as well as for its own defence, the government of Cuba will sell or lease to the United States land necessary for coaling or naval stations at certain specified points, to be agreed upon with the President of the United States.

Id. For the full text of the Platt Amendment, see Brenner et al., supra note 36, at 30-31.

n43. Leo Hubberman & Paul M. Sweezy, *Background of a Revolution*, in *The Cuba Reader*, supra note 19, at 14.

n44. See Aguilar, supra note 31, at 40-41.

n45. "The second American intervention (1906-9), in spite of its briefness, had a profound impact on Cuban life. Brought about by themselves, it seemed to justify Cuban doubts about their capacity for self-government. It undermined Cuban nationalism and reinforced the 'Plattist mentality' of relinquishing final political decisions to Washington." *Id.* at 43.

n46. See generally Aguilar, supra note 31, at 41-93.

n47. Leo Hubberman & Paul M. Sweezy, *Background of a Revolution*, in *The Cuba*

Reader, *supra* note 19, at 15. The second Cuban president to be elected was Jose Miguel Gomez (1909-1912). See Aguilar, *supra* note 31, at 43. "Nicknamed 'the Shark,' he inaugurated an era of public corruption. During his terms cockfighting and the national lottery, previously condemned as 'colonial vices,' were re-established, the lottery evolving into an efficient machine of political debasement." *Id.* General Mario Menocal, a conservative engineering graduate from Cornell University, had been a distinguished military leader and a successful administrator of a large sugar mill in Cuba. *Id.* at 44-45. He was elected and served for two terms (1913-1921). *Id.* at 45-47. During his first term, he met his electoral promises, but during his second term in office "corruption became rampant, fraudulent practices occurred in every election, and in spite of economic prosperity the president's popularity consistently declined." *Id.* at 45-46. In 1921, Alfredo Zayas assumed the presidency. *Id.* at 48. He "was a cultivated, opportunistic lawyer almost totally free of moral scruples." *Id.* One of the two worst presidents of Cuba followed: General Gerardo Machado ("The Butcher") who served from 1924 to 1933. Leo Hubberman & Paul M. Sweezy, *Background of a Revolution*, in *The Cuba Reader*, *supra* note 19, at 15. That year Sergeant Fulgencio Batista overthrew the military government and Ramon Grau San Martin and Antonio Guiteras established the new revolutionary government which lasted four months. Aguilar, *supra* note 31, at 54.

[Grau San Martin] introduced a series of necessary reform measures designed to alleviate the miserable conditions of the poor, made worse than ever by the Great Depression. Such reforms were what the island needed-but they were not what the privileged upper class of Cubans or American interests wanted. So the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt which, to its credit, abrogated the Platt Amendment, withheld recognition from the Grau government and Grau was ousted from office. The recognition that was denied Grau was granted to Batista when he became the "strong man" of Cuba in

1934, and he stayed in power, to the further debasement of Cuban life, for another ten years. Whether the administration in Washington was reactionary or liberal, whether the Platt Amendment was on the books or not, the long arm of United States power was never absent from Cuba. And the results were always the same-good for North American capitalists, bad for the Cuban people.

Leo Hubberman & Paul M. Sweezy, *Background of a Revolution*, in *The Cuba Reader*, *supra* note 19, at 15. A number of Batista's puppet presidents served in the 1930's: Jose A. Barnet (1935-1936); Miguel Mariano Gomez (1936); Federico Laredo Bru (1936-1940). Louis A. Perez, *Cuba, c. 1930-1959*, in *Cuba: A Short History*, *supra* note 23, at 74. In 1940, Sergeant Fulgencio Batista was elected president. *Id.* at 78. Batista served until 1944, followed by Ramon Grau San Martin (1944-1948) and Carlos Prio Socarras (1948-1952). *Id.* at 79. Batista returned to power in 1952 remaining until he fled on New Year's Eve in 1959. *Id.* at 83-93.

n48. See Aguilar, *supra* note 31, at 46-48.

n49. See *id.* at 49-50.

n50. *Id.* at 50.

n51. See Leo Hubberman & Paul M. Sweezy, *Background of a Revolution*, in *The Cuba Reader*, *supra* note 19, at 14; see also *supra* note 44 and accompanying text.

n52. See Brenner et al., *supra* note 36, at 2.

The long struggle against Machado and the turbulent period following his downfall have characteristics usually attributed to true revolutionary phenomena: violence, participation of the masses, radical programs, and some basic changes in the social and political structure of the nation. By profoundly shaking the political order in Cuba, by defying with a measure of success the hitherto unchallenged position of the United States, and by partially applying some of the radical ideas and programs that had been gaining ground since the 1920s, revolutionary groups of 1933 effected a profound change in Cuba. The revitalization of nationalism, the

opening of new economic opportunities for several national sectors, and the weakening of foreign dominance in Cuba were some of the consequences of their actions.

Louis E. Aguilar, *The Revolution of 1933*, in *The Cuba Reader*, supra note 19, at 20.

n53. *Id.* at 21.

n54. Matthew Reiss, *The Batista-Lansky Alliance: How the Mafia and a Cuban Dictator Built Havana's Casino's*, *Cigar Aficionado*, June 2001, at 147.

n55. *Id.*

n56. In 1955, the Batista government passed a law granting a gaming license to anyone who invested \$ 1 million in a hotel or \$ 200,000 in a new nightclub. And that meant anyone. Unlike the procedure for acquiring gaming licenses in Vegas, this provision exempted venture capitalists from background checks. As long as they made the required investment, they were provided with public matching funds for construction, a 10-year tax exemption and duty-free importation of equipment and furnishings. Although Batista's ostensible aim was to create new jobs, he gutted the labor laws to allow casino owners to bring their American croupiers.

Id. at 149.

n57. In addition to political problems, Cuba confronted five crucial socio-economic problems:

the slow rate of economic growth, sugar monoculture or the excessive significance of this product in the generation of GNP and exports, the overwhelming dependence on the United States in regard to investment and trade, the high rates of unemployment and underemployment, and the significant inequalities in living standards, particularly between urban and rural areas.

Carmelo Mesa-Lago, *The Prerevolutionary Economy and an Overview of Policy*, in *The Cuba Reader*, supra note 19, at 63 (Phillip Brenner et al. eds., 1989).

n58. Lawrence H. Theriot, *Cuba Faces the Economic Realities of the 1980's*, in *Cuban Communism* 257 (Irving L. Horowitz ed., 7th ed. 1989).

n59. Undoubtedly under Cuban-American pressure, Congress sought to intensify economic sanctions to "increase pressure for peaceful democratic change in Cuba and deter international involvement with property claimed by U.S. citizens that had been expropriated without compensation by the Cuban government." In February 1996, Cuban MiGs shot down two civilian aircrafts in international air space, killing three U.S. citizens and one U.S. resident. The Helms-Burton Act was then passed by overwhelming margins.

n60. Bonne et al., *The Homeland Belongs to Us All*, available at <http://www.fiu.edu/~diff>fcf/zhomelandbelongstoall.html> (last visited October 17, 2002). The four authors of the document, Vladimiro Roca, Felix Bonne, Rene Gomez, and Marta Beatriz Roque, were arrested on July 16, 1997 and incarcerated without a trial. *Id.*

n61. *Id.* The document opened with this powerful statement:

When you finish reading this document, you will be able to support us if we can agree on this initial assertion:

Man cannot live from history, which is the same as living from stories. There is a need for material goods and for satisfying his spirituality, as well as to be able to look to the future with expectations. But there is also a need for that openness that we all know as freedom.

The Cuban government ignores the word "opposition." Those of us who do not share its political stance, or who just simply don't support it, are considered enemies and any number of other scornful designations that it chooses to proclaim. Thus, they have also sought to give a new meaning to the word "Homeland" that is distortedly linked to Revolution, Socialism, and Nation. They attempt to ignore the fact that "Homeland," by definition, is the country in which one is born.

Id.

n62. See Cigar Aficionado, June 2001.

n63. James Suckling, *Dreaming of Cuba, The Fabled Island Begins to Offer Choices for Sophisticated Travelers*, Cigar Aficionado, June 2001, at 69.

n64. The articles covered topics such as "Places Worth Staying," "A world Class Resort," "Havana After Dark," "The Best Cuban Cigars," "Investing in Cuba," and "When the Mafia Ruled Havana." Cigar Aficionado, June 2001.

n65. *Supra* note 62, at 70.

n66. Cuba is now the fastest growing tourist destination in the Caribbean, and for good reason. It remains an icon for many of the good things in life, from music to history to cigars. (Yet, nearly all of Cuba's hotels and restaurants remain out of the reach of most Cubans, either due to expense-the average Cuban salary is \$ 25 a month-or because they are declared officially off-limits to Cubans by the government.

Id. at 70. See also PaxChristi Cuba Report: Tourism, at <http://www.cubacenter.org/media/recent%20score%20briefs/paxchristic.html#tourism%20score%20apartheid> (last visited Oct. 17, 2002). This "tourist apartheid" has a number of important functions for the government: it limits the effect tourism may have on the already deprived and miserable existence of its people; it allows tourists to enjoy their vacation without ever leaving isolated areas or seeing the reality of life in Cuba; it allows the Cuban government to be the exclusive benefactor of all the profits reaped from this growing and lucrative industry. In addition, tourism has exacerbated racism since blacks are purposely excluded from working in the industry; and, created a curious form of "brain drain" where professionals and intellectuals are leaving their professions and accepting meager jobs in exchange for easier access to dollars.

n67. Many scholars have proposed myriad reasons for Cuba's failure. I particularly agree with the following:

The first of these is the failure to produce anything resembling sustained economic growth... . The second stress proceeds from the first - a generalized sense of political alienation and spiritual fatigue felt by large sectors of Cuban society, which for 25 years have had to subsist on a steady diet of promises and exhortations, juxtaposed against recurrent shortages and draconic rationing. As Carlos Alberto Montaner reports, today in Cuba "the majority of the people no longer believes that the regime's mistakes are partial or that they can be corrected." Rather, they believe "quite simply that the system does not work, and that it is never going to provide them with either happiness or prosperity." This is particularly true for those under 25 years of age for whom the heroic days of the revolution are "foreign and remote."

The third proceeds from Castro's self-appointed role as a paladin of revolution in the Third World, particularly in lands distant from Cuba both geographically and culturally.

Mark Falcoff, *Cuba as a Marxist-Leninist Regime*, in *Cuban Communism* 746-48 (Irving L. Horowitz ed., 1989) (footnotes omitted).

n68. In the electronic communications that our panel exchanged, Professor Abreu made four important points:

First, as I've already said, it made me realize what a large gap in understanding there is between Cubans and Americans. With the end of the Cold War, the depth of the passions that it evoked have also been forgotten and they are unimaginable to many. As Berta (Professor Hernandez-Truyol) has pointed out, we can't separate the existence of the cold war from the favored immigration status we've enjoyed, and once that is gone the whole perception changes. Second, it made me realize how difficult reconciliation is and will continue to be. The feelings of many Cubans in Miami, especially Cubans of my parents' generation, run very deep. Arguments in favor of reconciliation sound to them like exhortations of those who deny the Holocaust ever existed. Third, because of

the depth of those feelings, reconciliation cannot effectively occur without understanding and acknowledgment on both sides. I think that we who would like to see more communication and opening up of the island must acknowledge and respect, not just belittle and ridicule the sensibilities of the other side. I don't know if acknowledgment that falls short of endorsement will be satisfactory, and I recognize that there is ample intransigence in that community, but I think that it has a chance of succeeding, at least with some people, perhaps younger people, whereas I think that ignoring the feelings is certain to lead to nothing but recrimination and acrimony. Fourth, we really need to work toward reconciliation and reunification. Enough with the pain. It has cost us; it continues to cost us; it affects our lives and the lives of those we love, and there just has to be a better way. It's time to develop a more constructive paradigm. As I said before, I think the development of that paradigm must include an acknowledgment of the pain and loss suffered on both sides. We can't ignore the past and the feelings the past generated. Rather, we must acknowledge it and move forward.

Electronic communications (on file with the author). See also Francisco Valdes, *Diaspora and Deadlock, Miami and Havana: Coming to Terms With Dreams and Dogmas*, [55 U. Fla. L. Rev. 283, 313-315 \(2003\)](#) (offering five basic guideposts toward a third way: 1) Stay independent of the prevalent bipolarities and their politics of oppression; 2) Insist on critical (and self-critical) approaches to Cuban reconciliation and reconstruction; 3) Frame reconciliation and reconstruction around egalitarian vindication of the "three generations of human rights; 4) Commit to the project of reconciliation and reconstruction to the proactive social and legal dismantling of Euroheteropatriarchy; 5) Demand disgorgement of unjust riches and reallocation of social goods as integral to Cuba's reconstruction as a post-subordination society).

n69. See Ernesto Betancourt, *Cuban Leadership after Castro*, in *Cuban*

Communism 810 (Irving L. Horowitz ed., 1989).

n70. Perez, *supra* note 38, at 3 (quoting speech by Jose Marti made in 1891).

